



[Immanuel Kant, 1724-1804](#)

Kant, the 'Critic of Pure Reason'

With Immanuel Kant, we will need some word-definitions. "Empirical" means sensed or found; *a priori* means first, or before; *a posteriori* means after.

The [Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason](#) (attached; download linked below) is a "propaedeutic", which is another word for introduction, or preliminary course. An "organon" is the whole course, or the whole work. "Hume" is [David Hume](#), a Scottish philosopher (also featured in the above cartoon).

Right at the beginning, Kant is trying to persuade his reader that although things are learned by experience, yet it is

possible to have known something before. This is a clear self-contradiction of Kant's, but he insists on it. He continues:

"In what follows... we shall understand by a priori knowledge, not knowledge independent of this or that experience, but knowledge absolutely independent of all experience. Opposed to it is empirical knowledge, which is knowledge possible only a posteriori, that is, through experience."

Kant then claims that the *a priori* knowledge is by nature collective, or in other words social, knowledge.

The source of collective consciousness is a matter of great interest to revolutionaries. Kant says it is already there. Few revolutionaries will agree with Kant.

Kant then prays for a science which will classify the details and describe the extent of *a priori* human knowledge, of which he says, in conclusion, that the first part will be *"the transcendental doctrine of sensibility."*

Are we any the wiser? At least we have this much: That Kant tried to have his cake and eat it. He wanted to have unreasonable reason. He wanted reason without a source or origin. Later, he even wanted religion that would be "within the limits of reason". Also, he wanted to create a taxonomy of "antinomies". That is a list or catalogue of things that contradicted each other, as if to list them would excuse them.

Kant seems to be rehearsing and trying to legitimate the bourgeoisie's necessary (for them) habit of believing two contradictory things at the same time, or, which amounts to the same thing, taking possession of all arguments and pretending that they all support the bourgeois position.

Part of this mental trickery is to endlessly categorise things. See the above cartoon, which can also be found in "Philosophy for Beginners", by Richard Osborne, a very helpful illustrated manual. According to Osborne's book, one of Kant's slogans was: "*Purposiveness without purpose.*" How pathetic!

Altogether, Kant appears like the fore-runner of the typical modern bourgeois journalist or "analyst". He can march the reader up the hill, and march the reader down again, purposively, but without purpose.

In this regard, please note that from the very first line, Kant is referring to "our" and "we". But who is this "we"? It is an *a priori* "we". It is a "we" that always pretends to be class-neutral, but is not in fact class-neutral. It is a "we" that does not willingly reveal its nature. It hides.

So long as the world is Kantian, so long does it remain in the tiresome hands of "analysts".

Back to Hegel

If Hegel is at all heroic, it must be partly for this: that Hegel refuses Kant, and thereby rescues philosophy from Kant's

dreadful pedantry. Hegel seeks to build a knowledge of the common, collective consciousness from history, by a process that can be understood, and observed, as a unity and struggle of opposites, or in other words dialectic.

Andy Blunden calls this man-made collective world of understanding “second nature”. This is the social environment, where the physical environment external to human beings is “first nature”.

Hegel opens the door that Kant keeps shut. It is the door to honest class-consciousness, which when open, reveals the road to revolutionary thought. It was Marx and Engels who realised this potential in Hegel’s philosophy. Conversely, understanding Hegel (as Lenin pointed out*) is going to help us to understand Marx. And that is our goal: Not Hegel for Hegel’s sake, but Hegel for the sake of understanding Marx, Engels, and everything that followed.

** “It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!” - Lenin*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Kant, Introduction to ‘Critique of Pure Reason’, 1787.](#)
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